STAR WARS™
DOCTOR APHRA
MARVEL
020
SPURRIER
WALKER
DEERING
TARTAGLIA

THE CATASTROPHE CON
Part I

It is a time of instability within the galaxy as the Rebel Alliance battles the Galactic Empire. For those operating on the fringes, there is much potential for profit.

Rogue archaeologist DOCTOR APHRA *is no stranger to risk in the pursuit of both credits and thrills, and she desperately wants to get back to what she does best – locating and liberating rare artifacts.*

But her recent exploits in blackmailed servitude to the psychotic droid crime lord Triple-Zero have landed her in custody and earned the ire of both rebels and Imperials alike....

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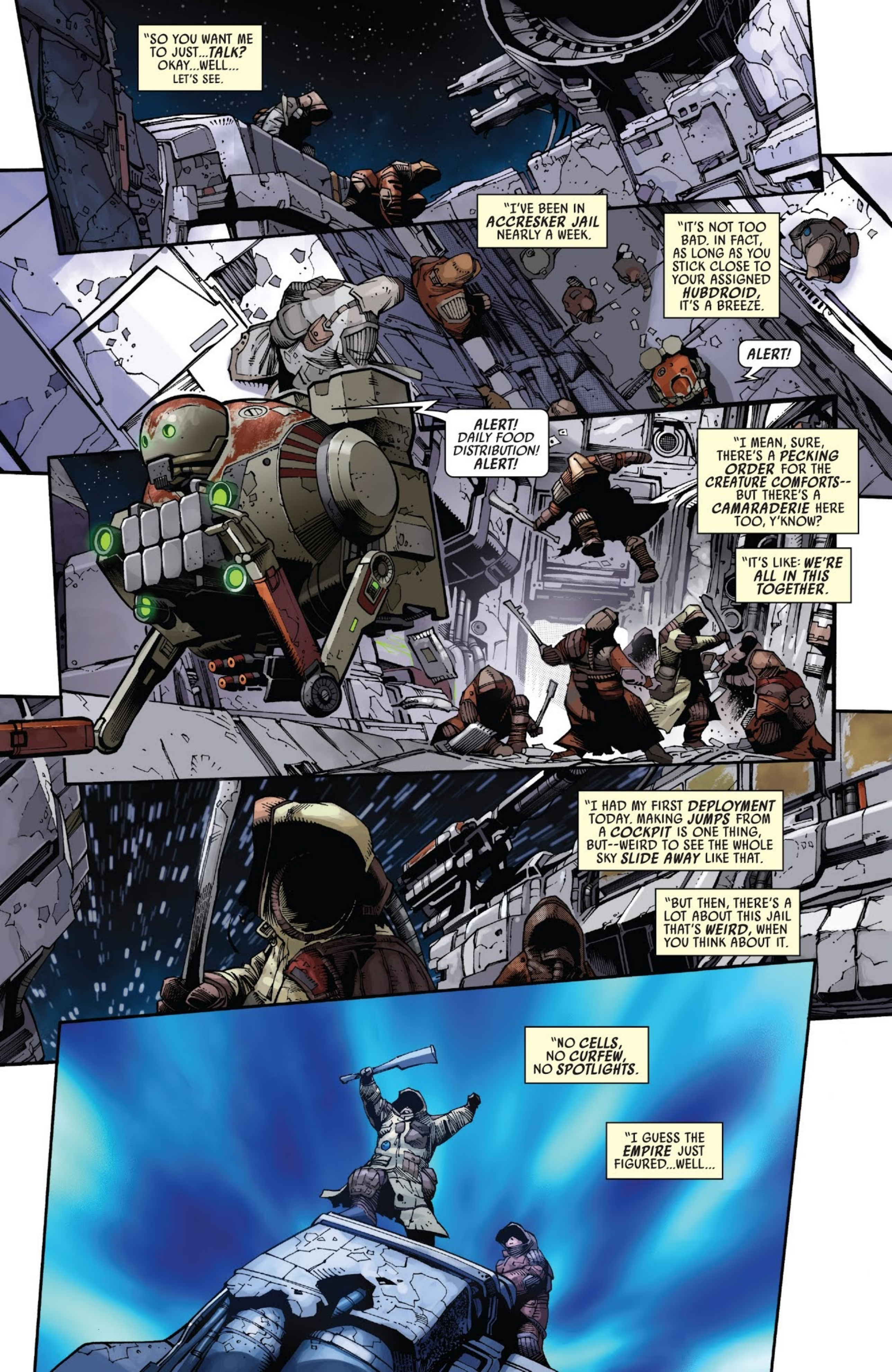

"SO YOU WANT ME TO JUST...TALK? OKAY...WELL... LET'S SEE.
"I'VE BEEN IN ACCRESKER JAIL NEARLY A WEEK.
"IT'S NOT TOO BAD. IN FACT, AS LONG AS YOU STICK CLOSE TO YOUR ASSIGNED HUBDROID, IT'S A BREEZE.
ALERT!
ALERT! DAILY FOOD DISTRIBUTION! ALERT!
"I MEAN, SURE, THERE'S A PECKING ORDER FOR THE CREATURE COMFORTS-- BUT THERE'S A CAMARADERIE HERE TOO, Y'KNOW?
"IT'S LIKE: WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER.
"I HAD MY FIRST DEPLOYMENT TODAY. MAKING JUMPS FROM A COCKPIT IS ONE THING, BUT--WEIRD TO SEE THE WHOLE SKY SLIDE AWAY LIKE THAT.
"BUT THEN, THERE'S A LOT ABOUT THIS JAIL THAT'S WEIRD, WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT.
"NO CELLS, NO CURFEW, NO SPOTLIGHTS.
"I GUESS THE EMPIRE JUST FIGURED...WELL...

"...WHY BOTHER?

Accresker Jail.
In Transit.

YAAAA-HOOOOOOOOO!

"YOU KNOW WHAT? THIS'LL SOUND *CRAZY* BUT--IT'S ACTUALLY KINDA BEAUTIFUL.

"EIGHTY THOUSAND TONS OF *WRECKED WARSHIPS* HELD TOGETHER WITH AN *ATTRACTOR NODE*, HAULED ABOUT BY A *CRUISER* ON *STRINGS*. I ALREADY THINK OF IT AS '*HOME*.'

"AND YOU GUYS? HELL--YOU GUYS GIVE US EVERYTHING WE NEED. ATMOSPHERE, GRAVITY, LIGHT...

"YEP--AS JAILERS GO? YOU'RE *MORE* THAN GENEROUS.

"YOU DON'T EVEN ASK FOR MUCH IN RETURN."

COLLECT A WEAPON!

REBEL VESSEL CRIPPLED BY FLEET ENGAGEMENT! PREPARE FOR BOARDING ACTION!

"SPARE US THE *FLATTERY*, INMATE. IT WON'T *GET* YOU ANYWHERE.

"TELL US ABOUT *YOU*. *THAT'S* WHAT WE'RE HERE FOR."

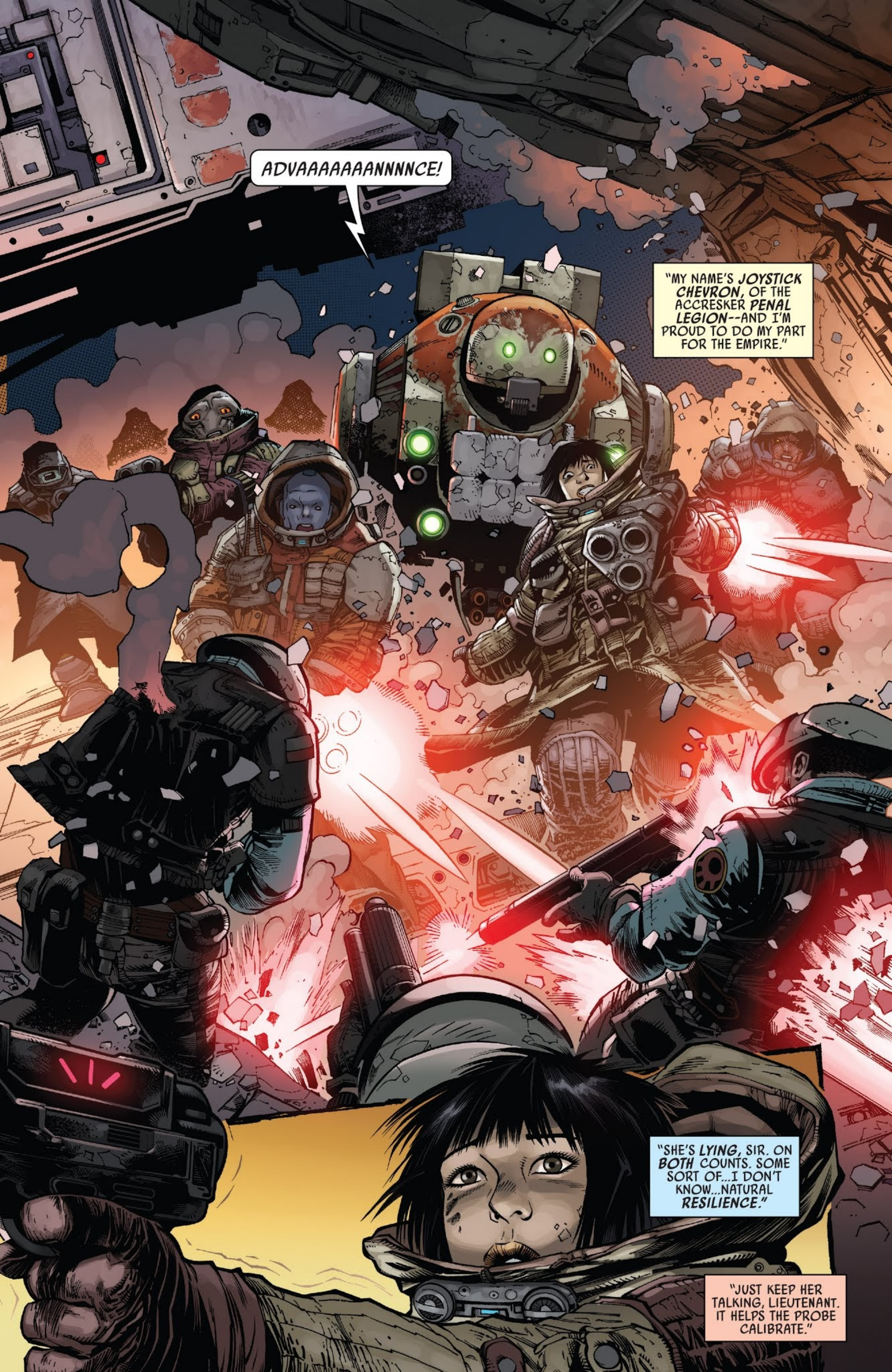
CONTROLLED COLLISION IN THREE... TWO...ONE--

"ME? WHAT'S TO TELL? LOOK--I'M NO *ANGEL*, BUT I'M NOT A *BAD* PERSON.

"ALL I WANT'S THE CHANCE TO *MAKE GOOD* ON THE--THE *MISTAKES* I'VE MADE.

GRAPPLES DEPLOYED! ALL BOARDING SQUADS--

"HEAD DOWN, CHIN HIGH. JUST DOING MY *TIME* WITH PATIENCE AND *DIGNITY*.


ADVAAAAAAANNNNCE!
"MY NAME'S JOYSTICK CHEVRON, OF THE ACCRESKER PENAL LEGION--AND I'M PROUD TO DO MY PART FOR THE EMPIRE."
"SHE'S LYING, SIR. ON BOTH COUNTS. SOME SORT OF...I DON'T KNOW...NATURAL RESILIENCE."
"JUST KEEP HER TALKING, LIEUTENANT. IT HELPS THE PROBE CALIBRATE."

"WELL--HOW DID YOU FARE IN THE RECENT BATTLE, INMATE?"
"OH, I LLLLOVED IT! Y'KNOW, I THINK SQUAD COMBAT IS JUST REALLY--ME.
AAAHHH!
"AND WHAT'S TO FEAR WHEN YOU GOT YOUR OWN GUARDIAN ANGEL, HUH?
CONVICT 2317! YOU ARE MORE THAN TEN METERS AWAY FROM ME DURING COMBAT!
NO... NO!
BLEEEEEP
I-IT'S MY FOOT, HUBDROID! JUST--JUST GIMME A SECOND! I'LL CATCH UP!
NEGATIVE! WE ADVANCE! ADVAAANCE!
"I MEAN-- EXPLOSIVE MICRO-IMPLANTS ON DISTANCE TRIGGERS? WAY TO INCENTIVIZE YOUR TROOPS, GUYS!
BOOOOOM!
"THAT'S WHY WHAT HAPPENED IS JUST SO--SO TRAGIC!"
"IT'S LIKE I SAID: STICK CLOSE TO YOUR HUBDROID, IT'S A BREEZE.
OH NO! REBEL COMMANDOS!
ADVAAAANCE!

TAP TIC. TAP SNAP CLK
FAULTY ASSESSMENT! THESE WERE-- KLK KLK--UNARMED ORGANISMS! W-WE ADV--ZZT-- VVVVB--ADVANCE ZZZT
ZZT ZZT
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE SARGE?
SAY, BUDDY, IT'S, AH, FLOPSO, RIGHT?
F-F-F-F-FUEL REGULATOR CIRCUIT ER-KL-ERR-KL-- ERROR--
IT'S LOPSET! LOPSET YAS! I-I'M JUST AN ELECTRICIAN! I SHOULDN'T BE HERE! I SHOULDN'T BE H--
UH-HUH, WHATEVER, I'M JUST GONNA, UM, STAND BEHIND YOU A SEC. FOR NO REASON.
"SO YOU CLAIM YOUR HUBDROID WAS DESTROYED, KILLING ALL OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR SQUAD?"
"EXCEPT THIS FLOPSO GUY, YEAH."

"THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE, PRISONER. YOUR IMPLANT WOULD HAVE AUTO-DETONATED AFTER TWENTY SECONDS."
OH NO, OH NO, OHHH...
"YEAH, WE CAME PRETTY CLOSE. LUCKY FOR US THERE WAS ANOTHER SQUAD PASSING BY."
SCANNING. THREE LIFE-FORMS.
"WAIT-- THREE?"
"LOOK, NO OFFENSE, BUT SOME OF THE TECH ROUND HERE IS KINDA BUGGY. I'M JUST TELLING IT LIKE IT HAPPENED."
"SHE'S NOT WRONG, SIR. JUST YESTERDAY THREE INMATES GOT SUCKED INTO A TRASH COMPACTOR, AND--"
"SHUT UP, IDIOT. KEEP HER TALKING."
PLEASE! PLEEEEEEASE LET US JOIN YOUR SQUAD, HUBDROID!
"WELL, IT TOOK ONE LOOK AT US AND SLAVED OUR MICRO-BOMBS TO ITS OWN TRANSMITTER. SAVED OUR LIVES, SIRS."
"IMPOSSIBLE! THEY'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO DO THAT! THE CRIMINALS ARE EXPENDABLE! THAT'S THE WHOLE POINT!"
"THIS PARTICULAR DROID WAS ONE OF THE NEW BATCH, SIR. JUST GOT SHIPPED IN AND REPROGRAMMED LAST WEEK."
"IT CLAIMS IT LOST ITS OWN SQUAD IN A SERIES OF--WELL--IMPROBABLE ACCIDENTS. GUESS IT WAS JUST POOLING RESOURCES."
"SEE? I'M TELLING THE TRUTH! BESIDES--ANYONE WHO KNOWS ME CAN TELL YOU--

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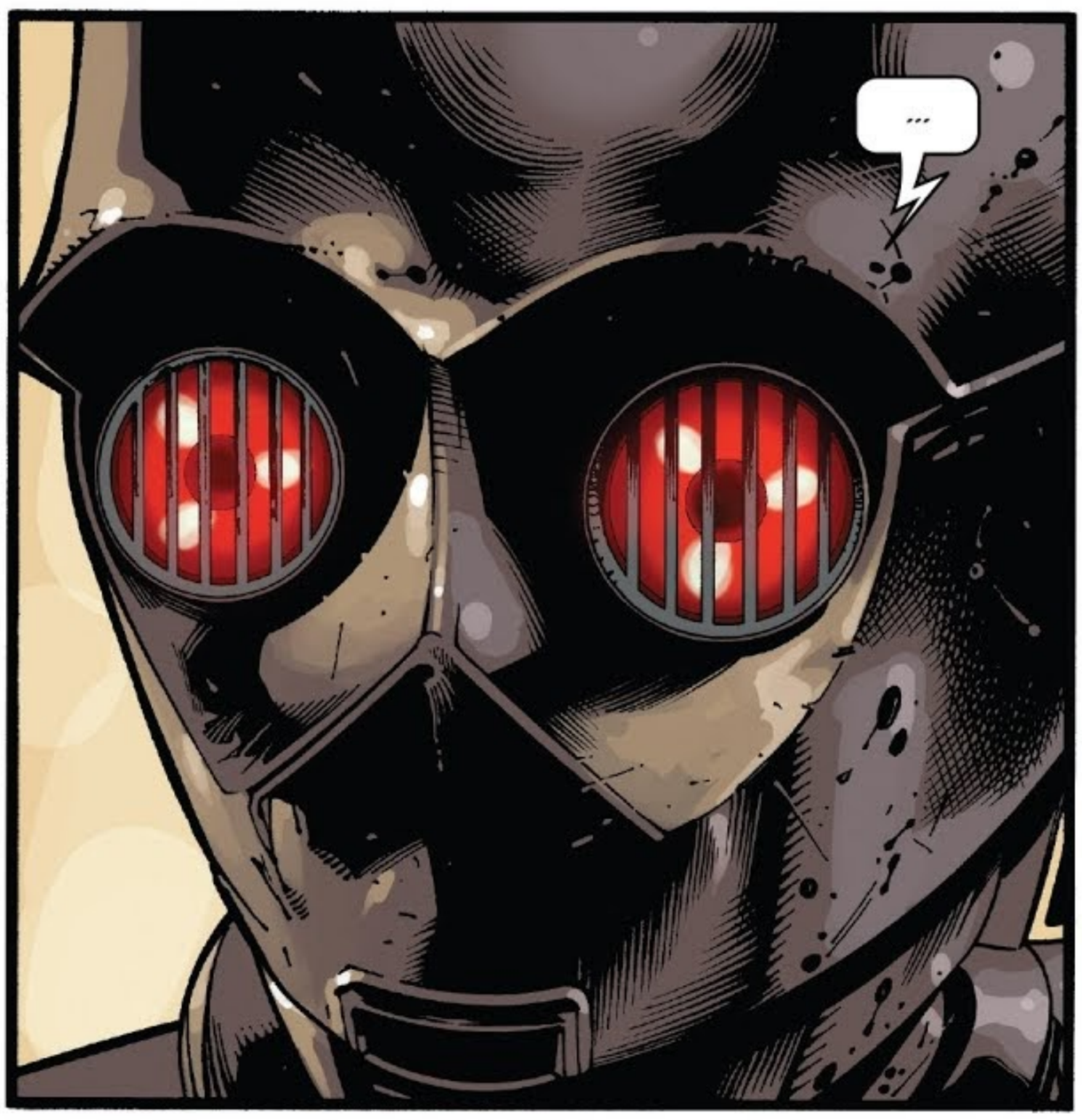

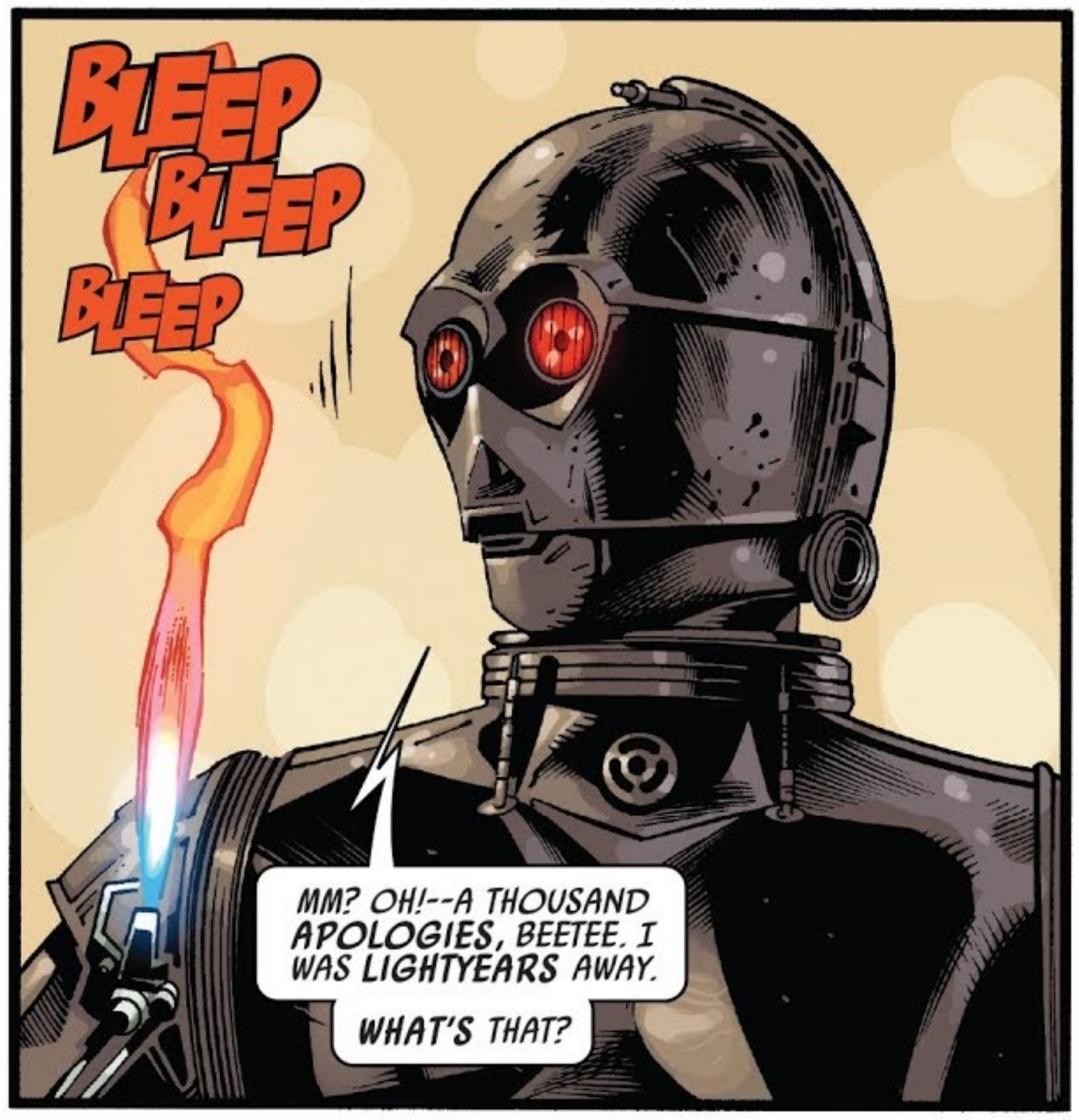

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Son-Tuul Spaceport.
I DON'T GET ANGRY.
"WELL? COME ON, THEN. WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?"

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TOLDJA.
PLEASE! W-WE'RE UNARMED! WE WERE ABOARD THE REBEL SHIP! WE WERE MERELY HIDING IN THIS ESCAPE POD WHEN--
THBBBPT
I DON'T BELIEVE IT. I-IT MUST'VE BOUNCED OFF A DOZEN PIECES OF DEBRIS. AND IT'S RIGHT ON THE EDGE OF THE AIRSHIELD! ONE MORE INCH AND IT WOULD'VE BURNED UP.
PEW!
PEW!
PEW!
IT'S... IT'S...
IMPROBABLE.
SAY, LET'S YOU AND ME HAVE A QUICK CHAT, LOPSET OLD BUDDY, ABOUT HOW MUCH IT'S WORTH TO GET YOU OFF THIS JUNKHEAP.
UM. DO RESTRAINING BOLTS USUALLY GLOW LIKE THAT?
WHH... ZZZK... WH...
DEK?

CRUNCH
UNSANCTIONED LAUNCH VEHICLE ON PRISON PREMISES!
ESCAPE RISK DETECTED!
NO!
THE POD!
HOW DID... H-HOW DID TH--
JUSTICE.

JUSTICE IS THE FORCE, AND THE FORCE IS JUSTICE.
WUHHH?

AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH
ALL PRISONERS! COMBAT SCENARIO CONCLUDED! ALL RESISTANCE OVERCOME!
ALL PRISONERS MUST WITHDRAW TO THE WRECKAGE-PRISON!
DID...DID YOU GUYS SEE THAT FIGU--
AIRDOME RETRACTING! BACK TO YOUR SECTOR, MUCKWORMS!
Y-YOU, UH. YOU'VE GOT A PLAN B, RIGHT?
BUT... BUT...
RIGHT?
"S-SO, YEAH. IT'S LIKE I SAID. WE STAYED WITH THE BATTLE. DID OUR DUTY. CAME HOME ALONG WITH EVERYONE ELSE AT THE END."
"ALL RIGHT-- THAT'S ENOUGH. SWITCH OFF THE PROBE AND REPORT."

I HAVE A ***MIGRAINE*** AND WOULD REGARD A COCKTAIL AS A ***MEDICAL KINDNESS.***

THE ELECTRONIC TATTOOS! THEY COULD BE SCRAMBLING THE PROBE!
MMM. INTERESTING. IT IS STRANGE THAT A HUMAN SO YOUNG WOULD HAVE SUCH AN UNFASHIONABLE AFFECTATION.
HEY!
SIR! IDEA! REMOVE THE PRISONER'S ARM!
HEY!
ALSO INTERESTING.
ALTHOUGH KEEPING HER ALIVE AFTERWARDS WOULD BE EXPENSIVE...AND SHE WOULD BE A LESS EFFECTIVE FIGHTER...
HMM-- NO. NO.
I COMMEND YOUR ENTHUSIASM, HUBDROID, BUT WE HAVE OTHER MEANS. MEANS OF DELVING HARDER AND DEEPER.
AND ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD.
ESCORT HER BACK TO THE HEAP.
UNTIL TOMORROW.

TELL ME YOU'RE *PRETENDING.*

TELL ME YOU'RE *PRETENDING.*

TELL ME Y--

SILENCE, PRISONER!

BACK TO YOUR QUARTERS!

THERE *IS* NO PLAN B.

AHRUM!

I, UH... I MIGHT BE ABLE TO *HELP* YOU THERE.

A TRANSMITTER. HOW DID Y--

I RUMMAGE, OKAY? I FIND THINGS AND I FIX 'EM. N-NOW LISTEN--

"THE IMPS'LL JAM ANY SIGNAL INSIDE A MINUTE. PROBABLY SEND OUT THE HUBDROIDS TO FRY THE SOURCE, TOO.

"BUT...YOU TRIED TO HELP ME, A-AND EVEN THOUGH IT DIDN'T WORK--AND EVEN IF YOU WERE SORTA TRYING TO EXTORT ME TOO--ALL THE SAME--

"--I OWE YOU ONE."

...

PEOPLE DIE WHEN THEY THINK I'M THEIR FRIEND, LOPSET YAS. YOU DON'T OWE ME ANYTHING.

HHH. ALL RIGHT. ALL RIGHT, LOOK, YOU WANT THE TRUTH?

"I TOLD YOU--I'M JUST AN ELECTRICIAN. I DON'T KNOW NOBODY WHO COULD GET US OUT. B-BUT YOU?

"YOU'VE BEEN AROUND--I CAN TELL. YOU'RE CONNECTED. ONE WEEK HERE AND ALREADY YOU NEARLY HOPPED.

"SO--YOU TELL ME, JOYSTICK CHEVRON--"

IF YOU HAD ONE CHANCE, JUST ONE.

ANYONE IN THE GALAXY.

"WHO WOULD YOU CALL?"
UM.
H-HOLO COMM FOR SANA STARROS.
To be continued!

DOCTOR APHRA
NEXT ISSUE:
A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away is a lot easier to get to than you think – and we want to hear from you! Write us at StarWars@Marvel.com if you want to make it onto a future letters page. Don't forget to mark your notes "OKAY TO PRINT."